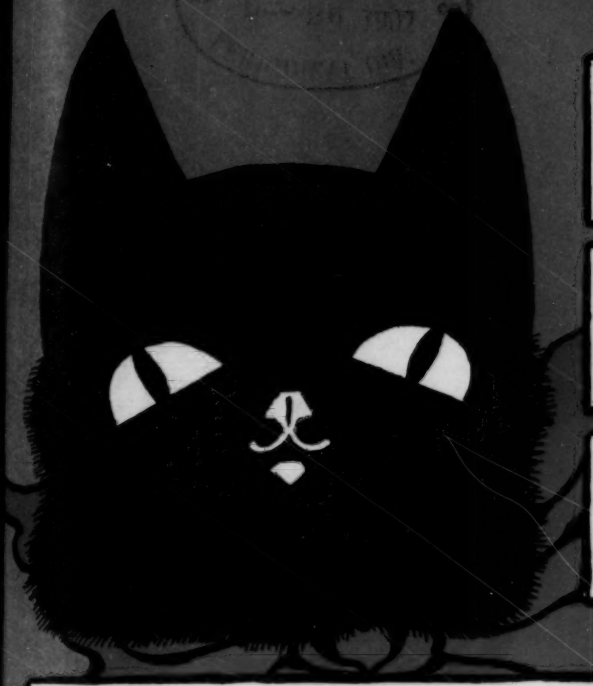

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January 1903

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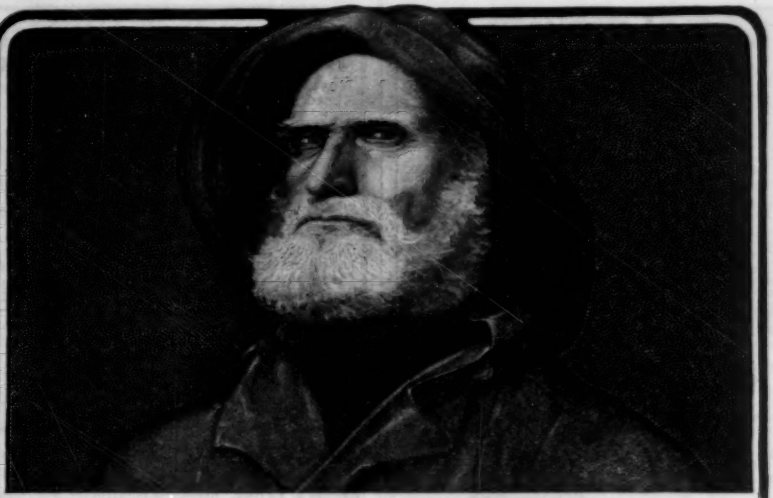

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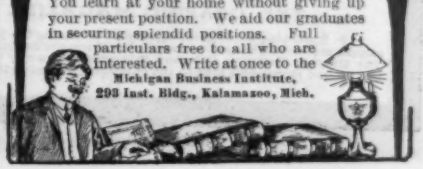

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JANUARY, 1903.

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The Dinner Party at Dayton Ranch.*

BY MABEL LODER STEARNS.

INNER was pending, and the guests of the hotel were gathered in indolent expectancy on the piazza to enjoy the beautiful Swiss sunset.

Miss Dayton had been comparing the view before her with the one from her own veranda at home in Wyoming. Incidentally she had added that Mrs. Willington had promised her a visit while on her trip through America that fall, and was to be with her during her uncle's enforced absence of several weeks.

Mrs. Willington was the regulation hotel widow, whom none of the other guests took seriously, but for whom Miss Dayton had conceived a very evident admiration, which the widow accepted with a gracious patronage.

The friendship had caused much comment in the hotel, and no one was surprised to hear of the proposed visit.

The only difficulty seemed to be the widow's extreme timidity. In a burst of confidence Miss Dayton had disclosed the fact that she had secreted her jewels in an old vault in the cellar of her house in Wyoming, and proposed leaving them there for safe keeping. "I care nothing for wearing them," she said.

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* The writer of this story was awarded the $250 Angelus Prize in THE BLACK CAT story contest ending February 26, 1902.

The widow appeared appalled at the prospect of being in the house with valuables of that sort, in such an isolated spot, without even Major Dayton for protection. The very thought seemed to terrify her, and she began to weaken on her promise.

But Miss Dayton reassured her with the further explanation that no one but the family knew of the jewels' whereabouts, and that none of the servants were aware of the vault's existence, even.

Mrs. Willington admitted that there was something in that, and consented to take the risk on Miss Dayton's promise that the jewels should not be taken from their hiding place during the widow's visit to the ranch.

"I do not wish to seem officious and cowardly, my dear, but you are such a careless, unsophisticated child that you do not realize the wickedness there is in the world. I have very little faith in the trustworthiness of servants," she asserted.

"When you come to the ranch, I will show you how impossible it would be for any one, without a knowledge of the vault, to get at the jewels," Miss Dayton assured her.

"What is it, Ah Foo? Oh, yes! the mail. Thank you."

"Where did you get him?" was asked, as the Chinaman left.

"Oh, we picked him up in Peking several years ago, and he has been our devoted slave ever since. He is a good soul!"

The ensuing week the Daytons sailed for New York. Three weeks later the widow followed them, and a bright afternoon in September found her comfortably ensconced on the veranda at Dayton ranch, greatly enchanted with her surroundings.

A few days after her arrival word came to Miss Dayton that Mrs. Barrows — an old friend of her mother — had been taken ill while travelling across the continent, and was laid up for repairs, as it were, at a stuffy little hotel in a near-by town. Miss Dayton, with prompt generosity, decided to go to her at once and bring her to the ranch. The widow shook her head dubiously.

It was a most unselfish impulse, of course, she conceded, but in her opinion Miss Dayton was incurring a great responsibility in undertaking the care of an invalid. But the girl was obdurate, pooh-poohing the idea of its involving any amount of care, or of there being any unselfishness in it.

"On the contrary, I am generally self-interested in all that I do!"

Mrs. Willington regarded her curiously for a moment. "Do you know," she said, "you are the most puzzling girl I have ever met. One minute you seem just an innocent child. The next, one gets a glimpse of a cynicism utterly incongruous with one's preconceived ideas of you."

"I have been delving into French philosophy somewhat of late — perhaps it has left a bad taste in my mouth," returned Miss Dayton, smiling.

A few uneventful days passed, then a telegram came for Mrs. Willington, which she handed to her hostess, explaining, "My brother and his chum." The telegram read:

> Tom and I pass through Lander's Crossing to-morrow. Will stop over to see you. FLETCHER FENTON.

Miss Dayton was sympathetically pleased, and expressed herself most cordially, insisting that the travellers should remain for several days at the ranch. The widow was delighted.

"My dear Miss Dayton," she began effusively, "you are hospitality itself!" but the girl cut her short.

"I told you once," she said, smiling, "that I always consulted my own ends. I am anxious to meet your brother and his friend."

Fenton and Darney came the following afternoon, and accepted with apparent pleasure Miss Dayton's invitation to prolong their visit. They were most enthusiastic over the ranch and the curiously built old house, and seemed to enjoy themselves hugely during their stay. It poured torrents the day before they were to leave. Miss Dayton had a wood fire lighted in the living room, and after luncheon all gathered about it to enjoy its warmth.

They had been telling stories and recounting strange experiences, when suddenly the widow clapped her hands. "The very thing!" she cried. "Miss Dayton, tell the boys the story of the secret vault."

"There is really very little to tell," replied Miss Dayton slowly. "The house was built by a miner in the days of the gold fever. He dug a lot of gold and was afterwards robbed of most of it. The loss turned his brain, and for years he lived here all alone, guarding the vault, which he filled with stones, believing them to be nuggets of gold. His ghost is supposed to guard it still, the natives say."

"By George! That's interesting," said Fenton.

"This vault is built in the foundation of the house and can be reached only through a secret panel in the cellar wall. We bought the ranch a few years ago, but have spent very little time here since. This summer, however, I grew tired of travelling and determined to come here for the pleasant fall months, even though my uncle could not be with me all of the time. It is quite safe," she continued; "the men on the place are trustworthy, and I am not in the least afraid. But I should have been lonely indeed during my uncle's absence had not Mrs. Willington taken pity on me."

"Safe enough, providing you don't keep any valuables in the house," commented Darney. "You don't do that, I hope."

"Why, of course I do! All my jewels are in that vault. The silver we leave in town because it is such a bother to bring it. But come! I will show it to you," she said, rising.

A slight sound made them all look up. It was only Ah Foo with more wood for the fire. Mrs. Willington eyed him suspiciously. "I don't like that pagan," she said irritably to Fenton, as Miss Dayton led the way to the cellar. "He always seems to be laughing at one without moving a muscle of his face!"

"He appears to me too stupid to be dangerous," Fenton objected.

"That shows how observing you men are!" Mrs. Willington retorted. "I tell you that boy will bear watching!"

"My dear Josephine, sometimes you are positively — delicious!" Fenton said, smiling.

It was about this time that an inscrutable Mongolian face, quite transformed from its usual impassivity, was pressed close to a crack in the door leading from the pantry into the cellar passageway. The slanting eyes, now alert and keen, watched the merry party as it passed. Then the door slid back noiselessly, and Ah Foo glided silently after them.

Down the passage they went to a door opening on to a stairway which led down into the cellar. This descended, another dark hallway was traversed, and then their guide turned into a narrow passage. Here she stopped and held aloft the lantern she carried, until the others came up.

"Now watch me. Here is the panel. You press here this way,

and that. And see — the panel slides back! You try it, Mr. Fenton," she said, closing the panel again.

Fenton did so and, after a little difficulty, succeeded.

"Let us go in," Miss Dayton suggested lightly. "The vault is quite large."

Mrs. Willington drew back nervously. "The rest of you go," she said. "I will wait outside."

Turning quickly, she encountered Ah Foo standing in the shadow. He came forward deprecatingly when he saw that he was discovered.

"What are you doing here?" she demanded sharply.

He had been getting wood from the wood pile, he explained apologetically, and had thought Missee Dayton had called him. Mrs. Willington assured him that she had not done so, and sent him about his business in a most peremptory manner. Meanwhile the others were poking about the vault.

"The jewels are in that," Miss Dayton said, pointing to a heavily bound iron chest. "It is too heavy for even two people to lift, which makes it all the less liable to be carried off, you see."

"What is to hinder its being rifled here?" asked Darney. "That is, providing access could be gained to the vault."

"I don't believe it possible to pick that lock. The chest is a very old one that my uncle brought from Egypt years ago, and the lock is a most complicated device — one that has baffled the skill of many an expert locksmith. The key I keep in my room under a loose brick in the hearth — a place that would never occur to any one. No, the only way would be to blow the chest open."

"It is a curious old place," observed Darney; "quite an ingenious arrangement."

They were interrupted by Mrs. Willington, who stuck her head through the open panel. "For goodness' sake! come out of this," she said, crossly. "I'm cold and want to go back to the fire."

Ah Foo was still in the wood room when they passed, but he was apparently hard at work and did not look up. Fenton and Mrs. Willington exchanged glances.

"I wish you would keep an eye on that heathen," the widow said. "He was hanging around all the while you were in the vault."

"Very well, I will. Perhaps you are right in thinking him more knave than fool."

On reaching the stairway Miss Dayton remembered that she had not ordered tea, so, admonishing the rest to go without her, she went back to speak to Ah Foo, whom she noticed as she passed.

It had been a depressing sort of day, and all were tired and ready to retire at an early hour that night. Mrs. Willington plead a headache, and the men their early start in the morning. Their hostess seemed glad of the relief, and went to her own room soon after the rest had retired. She did not go at once to bed, but sat for some time before the fire that crackled cozily on the hearth.

She looked strangely old and worn, as she sat there absently watching the dancing flames, an unspeakable weariness in her eyes, while every line of her drooping figure showed the exhaustion that mastered her.

"I must not lose my nerve now," she muttered — "now, when there is so much at stake!" And reaching for a glass of sherry that stood on a table near, she drank it quickly and hurried to bed.

A few hours later a cloaked figure stole noiselessly through the narrow passage leading to the vault. Slowly, cautiously, it crept along, until the secret panel was reached. Here it stopped. The silence was unbroken, and the figure, as if satisfied, was about to go on, when a slight sound issued from the darkness beyond. Wrapping its cloak more closely about it, the figure drew farther back against the wall. Silence again. Then the sound was repeated. Nearer, this time, taking the form of a stealthy step, but so slight as to seem almost imaginary. Then a whisper — close now to the cloaked figure — sneering — contemptuous — mocking! — "Allee samee damn fool!"

The cloaked figure made no move to discover the identity of the voice, but stood motionless until the steps had passed, then it returned by the way it had come.

The next morning after breakfast Fenton drew his sister aside. "You are right," he said. "I think that heathen of Miss Dayton's has some game on."

"I told you so! What had I better do? Speak to Miss Dayton?"

"Not just yet. I would wait a little. Let things take their course for a few days — unless something should occur to warrant

your speaking before then — something that you can put your finger on, I mean. It will be wiser, I think," he added.

Miss Dayton joined them just then and there was no further opportunity to discuss the subject before Fenton and Darney left.

That afternoon Mrs. Willington came into the living room, where Miss Dayton was writing.

"There is a Syrian woman outside," she said, "with some beautiful laces. It has begun to rain again, and I am afraid to stay out on the veranda. But I am dying to see those laces. Would it be running too great a risk, do you think, if we let her come inside?"

"Why, no," Miss Dayton replied, laying down her pen. "It will be all right, I'm sure."

The Syrian woman came in shyly at their bidding. A dirty, picturesque creature, and very ill at ease until reassured by Miss Dayton's enthusiasm over her wares.

An hour was spent in discussing the comparative merits of the laces, but at length some pieces were selected and the woman took her departure.

Mrs. Willington watched her from the window. Miss Dayton had gone from the room on an errand. When the latter returned the widow was greatly perturbed.

"I am very uneasy," she said nervously. "Do you know, Miss Dayton, I am afraid we have done a most imprudent thing to let that woman into the house. I realize it now. And as well, I am greatly distressed to see you place the confidence you do in that Chinaman of yours. Several things have occurred to arouse my suspicions. I know he heard you talking of the jewels, and he has been skulking about ever since. I do not trust him, and Fletcher thinks just as I do about it. And while you were gone just now something happened to confirm my misgivings."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, as that peddler left the veranda, she took out a handkerchief and dropped it in a most conspicuous way. Ah Foo joined her immediately, and the two talked earnestly together for a few minutes. Then the woman gave Ah Foo what looked like a folded paper. This he took with a nod as if he understood, and then returned to the house. The woman went on."

Miss Dayton looked serious. "I have never thought Ah Foo dishonest," she said in a troubled way. "In fact, he has never seemed bright enough to be anything but harmless. He has been devoted to me always. However, I shall watch him closely. I am glad you have told me what you have. But I am fond of the boy and am loth to believe him crooked. I will question him a little," she added, touching the bell. The Chinaman responded promptly.

"Who was that woman that was here, Ah Foo?"

Ah Foo looked blank. He shook his head. "Me not know," he said.

"Have you never seen her before?"

"No, Missee."

"What were you saying to her just now?"

"She not know way to go. Ah Foo say how to her."

"Was that all?"

"Yes, Missee."

"Very well, you may go." Then as he left the room, she said, "That may be the truth, you know. The Oriental is always dramatic even over mere nothings. I will watch him, however."

. . . . . .

"Well, my dear, instead of this being an isolated spot, I should say it was on the public highway," declared the widow one morning a week later. "Every one seems to pass this way on his travels. Here are friends of mine — Colonel Driscoll and his nephew — staying with some people who live only five miles from here. The Colonel heard in some way of my whereabouts, and wants to ride over on Friday."

"We must ask him to dine with us," Miss Dayton said. "That is the night Mr. Darney and your brother are coming back to bid us good-by, you know, and we will have quite a little dinner party. I wish my uncle could get here in time for it, but he cannot make the ranch before Saturday, he says."

"I wish he might too! What fun! The boys will enjoy it immensely. I fear you have made sad havoc there, my dear."

"Really," returned the girl, absently. Then she looked at the widow and smiled.

"There, my dear! Now you wear that cynical thousand-year-old expression again. You are too young to be cynical."

"Am I? Well, never mind! Let us send off our notes. I will inclose mine with yours."

"I am glad Major Dayton is to return so soon," Mrs. Willington said, "because I must start for New York with Fletcher on Saturday, I think."

Miss Dayton exclaimed in dismay. "Why, I haven't carried out half my plans for you," she said regretfully.

Mrs. Willington assured her that her visit had been a most charming one, and that she was more reluctant to go than she could say, but her father, it seemed, was not at all well, and she felt it her duty to go to him as soon as possible.

"If I go with Fletcher," she argued, "I shall avoid having to travel alone, which is always so disagreeable, I think."

Miss Dayton, though much distressed, she said, could not, of course, try to detain her under the circumstances. Mrs. Willington herself was quite affected, but speedily recovered her spirits at thought of the dinner party, and went off to write her notes.

The thousand-year-old expression was very apparent now, as the girl went to her desk to write her own notes. Having finished them, she took up a telegraph blank and wrote the following dispatch:

To Mr. R. S. Hamlin,
Northern Ridge,
Wyoming.
Dayton Ranch, Sept. 23, 1899.
Four. Sept. 26. At nine.
H. D.

Then she rang for Ah Foo. "Take this note to Mrs. Willington," she said. "And this" — handing him the dispatch — "I want you to take at once to the telegraph office at Lawrence. It is to be 'rushed,' tell the man."

The Chinaman shot a quick glance at his mistress's face, then said simply, "Velly well, Missee," and left the room.

The dinner party was a great success. The widow, particularly, was in the gayest of spirits, the men delightfully entertaining and Miss Dayton positively brilliant. The girl seemed transformed from her usually quiet self into a dazzling woman of the world. Ah Foo, who assisted in the serving of the dinner, watched her with an intentness that did not escape Fenton.

They had been talking of the early history of the West, when Colonel Driscoll suddenly exclaimed: "By the way! There is a rumor afloat that the Lawrence stage was held up last night about five miles from here."

"You don't say so!" ejaculated Fenton, while the widow shivered with terror. All were keenly interested and Miss Dayton laughed delightedly.

"Well, that is an event for this prosaic old county! Have they caught the robbers?"

"No, they are still at large, I believe," answered the Colonel.

"You see I was right," broke in the widow, triumphantly; "it is most unwise to keep valuables in a place of this kind — You are spilling that water on my dress, Ah Foo! What is the matter with you?"

Miss Dayton was talking to the Colonel and did not hear this, nor notice that Ah Foo's eyes were riveted on her face. The sound of a bell just then made her look up and beckon to him.

"That is Mrs. Barrows's bell," she said. "Go to her quickly."

After Ah Foo had left Mrs. Barrows's room, he did not at once return to his duties in the dining room. Instead, he walked swiftly down the hall to Miss Dayton's apartment, which he entered without hesitation. Crossing to the fireplace he stooped and lifted a loosened brick from the hearth, at the same time running his long fingers quickly over the place where it had been. Then replacing it carefully, with a low chuckle, he softly retraced his steps with the cat-like motion peculiar to him, and a minute later entered the dining room, as impassive and inscrutable as ever.

"Mrs. Barrows was most interested in our little gathering tonight and was anxious to come down. But I knew the excitement would be too much for her, so dissuaded her from it," Miss Dayton was saying.

"What was it, Ah Foo?"

"Missee Barr — say she hope allee you drink her health."

"Of course!" cried Miss Dayton, warmly, raising her glass.

All responded cordially to the toast. Then Fenton asked, smilingly, "Are you an advocate of total abstinence, Miss Dayton?"

"Why?"

"I noticed that you merely touched your lips to your glass."

"I have a slight headache to-night, so am not drinking anything, that is all."

For an instant a peculiar smile flickered over the face of the observant Ah Foo — whether of satisfaction, triumph or amusement, Fenton, who was watching him, could not determine. Possibly, it comprised all three. But it was gone in a second, and Fenton was baffled again.

The talk drifted to other things, and dinner was drawing to a close, when suddenly an exclamation of alarm from the Colonel arrested the attention of all. Miss Dayton, her face covered with her hands, had risen and was swaying unsteadily on her feet. She would have fallen, had it not been for the timely aid of the Colonel and Ah Foo, both of whom sprang to catch her.

The widow, on the verge of hysterics, finally rose to the occasion and produced some smelling salts, which seemed to have no particular effect, however. The Colonel and Fenton carried the now unconscious girl into the adjoining room and laid her on the divan, Mrs. Willington and the faithful Ah Foo in attendance. The men, at the widow's suggestion, then went into the hall for a smoke. The latter seemed to be rendered utterly powerless in the emergency, while Ah Foo evinced an intelligence most surprising, seeming to know just what was needed.

At last Miss Dayton opened her eyes. "What has happened?" she asked, wonderingly.

Mrs. Willington explained, soothingly, while Ah Foo stood in respectful silence, eyeing intently his mistress's face. He seemed to be watching for something.

"I am sorry to have made such a fuss," the girl said. "Where are the men?"

"Gone for a smoke."

"An hour's rest is all I need, but you go to them, please. Ah Foo will stay with me in case I should want anything."

The request was made with such quiet insistence that the widow was forced to comply. She went, however, with many protests against leaving.

When she had gone, Miss Dayton lay quite still for some minutes with her eyes closed. Ah Foo had not moved nor taken his gaze from her face. At last she opened her eyes cautiously.

"Is there any one about?" she asked.

"Yes, Missee, I hear 'em talk."

"Where are they?"

"In the sittee room, Missee."

Miss Dayton thought a moment. "Wait here till I return," she said.

There was no sign of either weariness or weakness in the girl's bearing now, as she left the room and mounted a back staircase to her own apartment. Going straight to the fireplace, as Ah Foo had done an hour before, she lifted the brick from its place. The key to the vault was gone!

Miss Dayton did not evince any surprise. Rather, it seemed to be what she had expected. Replacing the brick quickly she returned to the library, where she found Ah Foo wandering restlessly about. She gave him a quick scrutiny as she entered.

"Is there any one in the hall now?"

"No, Missee."

"You are sure?"

"Yes, Missee, allee gone."

"Very well."

Miss Dayton stood shading her face from the lamp as she spoke. "This light hurts my eyes," she said. "Put it on that table by the window, Ah Foo."

The Chinaman obeyed her, and then continued his restless patrol of the room. At this juncture the widow appeared, burdened with apologies for her long absence. She had unfortunately become involved in an argument with the Colonel, etc. She was delighted, however, to find her charge so much better. Every one had been most solicitous, she said, and had sent her all sorts of nice messages. While she paused for breath, there was the sound of a muffled footstep on the veranda outside.

Mrs. Willington started. "What is that?" she asked nervously.

"One of the men, probably."

"Ah Foo will go and see, Missee," the boy volunteered, indifferently.

As he spoke, Mrs. Barrows hobbled into the room. "Well, I thought I would come down," she said.

"Why! Mrs. Barrows! What—"

"Now don't ask me why I came," interrupted the old lady testily, "because it is perfectly patent why. I was just tired of being up there by myself," and she seated herself, with an irate snort, in the nearest chair.

"We are very glad to have you with us, I'm sure," Miss Dayton said politely. "I only feared the exertion might be too much for your strength."

"That's my affair!" Mrs. Barrows snapped. "Now go on with your talk, and don't mind me," she added more affably.

"I must see what has become of Ah Foo," Miss Dayton said at last, as the Chinaman did not return.

"Let me go for you," the widow said earnestly. "You ought not to exert yourself any more to-night."

Miss Dayton thanked her with the assurance that she was feeling quite herself again, and was going only into the hall. Closing the door after her she stood still to listen. The hall was deserted. Outside the wind moaned dismally, but there was no other sound. The girl considered for a moment. Then, leisurely crossing the hall, she touched an electric button in the wall. As she did so and turned away there was in her eyes the supreme joy of the master-painter as he adds the touch of completion to his picture.

When the widow appeared a minute afterward, Miss Dayton was seated in an easy chair, apathetically turning the leaves of a magazine. She looked up inquiringly as the widow came forward.

"Well, did you find your pagan?" Mrs. Willington demanded. "You went to hunt him up, I believe."

"No, I didn't find him. I became interested in this book."

"My dear Miss Dayton," said the widow irritably, "you astonish me! How can you be so blind to what is as plain as the nose on your face to every one else?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," replied the girl with an aggravating smile. "Perhaps I am hopelessly obtuse."

"And in the face of the stage's having been held up only last night, and with the robbers still at large, too!" the widow went on indignantly. "I shan't sleep a wink to-night. There have been some horrible burglaries lately!"

Miss Dayton was intent on her book and did not answer at once. Then she recalled herself. "Yes, there have been a good many,"

she agreed absently. "There was the Broxton robbery, about a year ago. That created quite a sensation, I remember. They have not succeeded in catching any of the gang as yet, but they have got a clue to the whereabouts of some of them, I am told. Why, Mrs. Willington, are you ill? What is the matter?"

"Just a slight giddiness; I am all unstrung, I tell you! I wish the men would come back! They have gone for a walk somewhere. But you were saying that the Broxton robbers had been traced. I had not heard that. I have been particularly interested in that affair, as a friend of mine was visiting there when it happened, and so lost her jewels with the rest. I hope they will be successful in tracking the thieves, but detectives nowadays are so stupid that one wonders why they are employed."

As the widow finished speaking there were heavy footsteps in the passage. Then the door leading from it into the larger hall opened and Miss Dayton's four dinner guests, with the Syrian woman, were ushered in by eight strange men, armed to the teeth.

Miss Dayton arose, regarding them with a cynical smile as they approached, at the same time grasping something in her hand that glittered suggestively. The widow, with blanched face, sat helplessly where she was.

"Miss Dayton," Fenton burst forth furiously, "what do these ruffians mean by this outrage? Are they mad?"

"I think not," she returned, quietly. "The fact is they are my guests, too, whom I have invited to meet you all — a meeting I have been arranging for many months — ever since the Broxton robbery. I am sorry if the pleasure has not proved a mutual one. These other friends of mine have been looking forward to it with much enjoyment, I assure you. This old house, with its secret vault, has served my purpose admirably as a meeting place. And the little fiction about the jewels proved to be just the alluring bait I thought it would. For the rest, my own 'innocence and lack of worldly knowledge,' and so forth," — with an amused glance at the discomfited widow — "was all that was needed to complete the means by which the end — this little dinner party of mine — was accomplished. It was unfortunate for you that my friends should have come upon you so inopportunely, but isn't it rather unusual to find one's dinner guests in the cellar?"

The widow glared savagely at her, like an animal at bay, and then made a desperate move toward the door. Miss Dayton covered her instantly with the little silver-mounted pistol she held in her hand. As she did so, the library door opened, and the erstwhile old lady Barrows, with wig and cap in hand, joined the group, and stood back of the widow's chair. Miss Dayton greeted them smilingly. "My uncle, Major Dayton," she said politely, "better known to all of you, perhaps, as Mrs. Barrows. You will be glad to know that her health is quite restored."

"To you, Mrs. Willington," she continued, mockingly, "I would say that your friends here may well be proud of their accomplice. You have acted your part well, though not as successfully, perhaps, as in the Broxton affair!"

Here she turned to the officers again. "You scarcely expected, I think, to meet in our Broxton friends the men who so kindly relieved the Lawrence stage of its valuables last night. But you will find upon a little investigation that they are one and the same — being equally proficient in all branches of the profession. And now, as you will not require our services any further, we will say good night."

Wonder, bewilderment and rage strove for the mastery on the faces of the baffled group, curiosity finally prevailing for the moment.

"Who, in Heaven's name, is that woman?" snarled Darney.

"That," said the officer, grinning with importance, "is Miss Helen Delaine, the cleverest, bravest woman detective in all Europe!"

"And that heathen, Ah Foo?"

"Her most able scout."

"Well, the game's up, pals!" said Fenton, philosophically. "We're tricked — and by a woman! By George!"

Just then the door opened cautiously, and the grinning visage of Ah Foo thrust itself into view. Fixing his gaze contemptuously on Fenton, he remarked sententiously:

"Allee samee damn fool!"

Should Chance Permit.*

BY P. C. DUORTS.

OW and then a spider or a great brown rat would break the silent monotony of the cell by scurrying across the stone floor, damp with moisture. Even this uncanny diversion was grateful to the two American officers who were quartered in what had been a Spanish prison and fortress, but which was now occupied by Filipino guerilla bands.

The elder of the two men, who lay stretched listlessly upon the damp stones, was a captain in the American army, while his companion was a young second lieutenant who had just been commissioned from West Point. Both of them had been captured the day before by what were supposed to have been friendly natives, and even now they were within easy sight of the American lines, though neither of them hoped that their whereabouts would ever be learned by their countrymen or that they would be able to escape even that short distance. In all probability their death would be accomplished within a very short time by as horrible torture as could be conceived of by their captors.

Neither the captain nor the lieutenant spoke much, for each one seemed to be wrapped in his own meditations. There was absolutely nothing for them to do but wait for a change, for the better or worse as the case might be. Suddenly both men raised their heads. Far down the stone corridors could be heard the steady tramp of a squad of soldiers as they approached nearer and nearer to the cell, situated, as it was, in the extreme left wing of the castle. The guard halted presently before the door. The key rattled in the old lock and then the heavy iron door creaked and swung back upon its rusty hinges.

The officer in command simply motioned the Americans to rise

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and fall into line. Then, without further words, they marched back through the dark, moist passages and up long winding stairways until they reached the apartments of the brigand chieftain, quite richly furnished, as they were, with barbaric splendor and American trophies taken by the guerilla bands.

Here was the man whose heartless cruelty had made his name a terror throughout the islands. He resembled a small-sized negro, dressed in white and wearing side arms, except, perhaps, for a crafty look about his treacherous black eyes and a cruel smile which played around his thick lips, the marks of the cold-blooded villain.

The chieftain was speaking to one of his attendants, who immediately interpreted to the American officers: "The captain gives the noble señors the best greetings of the day and says that after he has provided the Americanos with a little entertainment, which he has prepared for them in the courtyard, he will be pleased to dine with the reverend señors, if they will condescend to his humble fare." Then the Filipino captain, after addressing a few more words to the officer of the guard, bade them a kind farewell.

The guard led them below into what was not a courtyard but an alleyway between two stone walls. The path between the walls was about four feet wide and a hundred feet in length. At one end of the passage was a large iron shield; at the other was the muzzle of a Spanish field piece, glistening in the sun's rays. The American officers needed no explanation from the interpreter, who told them that if they could cover the distance between the cannon and the shield before the time-fuse was burned, they might eat the elaborate dinner which his noble captain prepared. If they failed in swiftness, well — it would be better to imagine the result.

Above them there was a little platform, built out from the castle wall, upon which, still coolly smiling, sat the same treacherous black devil who had just invited them to dine with him. The blood of the fiery young lieutenant fairly boiled, but the older man was very calm; he knew that he would die in the attempt because he was too heavy to run fast, and therefore preferred to spend his last moments otherwise than in useless anger.

The interpreter bade them make ready, and informed the captain

that as age should have precedence, he, the captain, should, therefore, make the first attempt. The brigands well knew that the captain could not run fast enough to escape the awful death awaiting him, and that the lieutenant would undoubtedly slip on the bloody pavement. The words of the two American officers were few. Imminent danger inspires a man's thoughts rather than his tongue. A hearty handshake, a word of encouragement and a parting farewell were all that passed between the two friends.

Everything was ready. The gunner had lighted the fuse and immediately the captain was pushed from behind the shield. Seconds lengthened into hours. Suddenly there was a roar, and the grape-shot rattled against the protecting shield. Outside everything was covered with the remains of the brave captain; the walls were dripping with his life-blood. Above, the guerilla chief, in his white ducks, was still smiling and calmly smoking his dainty little cigarette. He was telling the interpreter that the captain was by far too fat and that he thought the lieutenant would make a much prettier race.

The gunner reloads his cannon and times the fuse. He lights it. The guards shove the lieutenant forward. Four months before he had run a race at West Point, but what a difference between the crowd of merry cadets with their waving banners and the stones, red with blood, over which he must now win the course or die. His feet slip on the pieces of mangled flesh. His muscles move, oh! so slowly. The fuse is burning and burning, its glowing end coming closer and closer to the priming in the vent. There is only a few feet between the runner and the black mouth of the cannon. There is but a fraction of the fuse remaining. One — two more strides, and he leaps high above the shining brass just as it belches forth its murderous flame.

Safe, but panting, he lights upon the parapet beside the amazed gunner. He does not trust the brigands further, nor does he wait to accept the chieftain's invitation to dinner, but continues his mad course till he reaches the safety of the American lines.

Eliza.*

BY MARY AND ROSALIE DAWSON.

THE way train, which had been speeding out of town at the rate of twelve miles an hour, came suddenly to a standstill with a violent recoil in crossing a country lane, and Revere, shaken out of his reverie, threw up the car window, quite prepared for a panorama of dismembered bodies.

But, as the view from the window revealed only an impassive stretch of green, without so much as one detached arm or leg, he settled back immediately to the consideration of a more important question.

SHE was a friend and neighbor of the Pottertons. There was a fairish chance that she might be seen at their house, since an invitation to see her at her own home had not been forthcoming. That ten minutes' tiff at the seashore where they met had not in the least detracted from her charm, though it had entirely demolished his welcome, and he would do much to be near her for a week — endure the Pottertons, even, for that length of time.

He was aroused again from his speculations a moment or two later by a perturbation at the end of the car. Glancing up, he found the neurotic little conductor in excited conference with passengers near the door.

A number of them were turning in their seats and pointing to something or some one down the aisle. It seemed to the young man that he himself was being indicated, and he caught the words, "tall, slimmish young fellow in the gray suit," a description, albeit imperfect, of himself.

A moment later the little conductor whizzed up to him.

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"I beg pardon, Mister," he said, lowering his voice to a whisper, "but you have a bag there which looks as if it might have a musical instrument in it."

"Why, yes," the young fellow answered in astonishment. "My banjo."

"A banjo! That's lucky! What toons can you play? Can you play 'Yankee Doodle'?"

"Jehoshaphat! Why, yes, I guess so, if worse came to the worst. But what in the name of patience —"

"Then you're the man we want, and we want you the worst in the world. This way, sir, please, and as quick as you can, if you don't mind. We can't move the car an inch till she hears 'Yankee Doodle.'"

"But what —"

"It's the only thing that will start her up. We've tried everything else. Pushing, pulling, everything. She sticks on the tracks like a coal wreck. I wouldn't bother you, but we're five minutes late already. You'll be doing all hands a great kindness if you'll come along and grind out a good lively 'Yankee Doodle.'"

Revere caught up his banjo case and hurried after the official, wondering, as he went, which of them had gone insane and whether the attack would prove to be a permanent softening of the brain, or merely a temporary aberration.

A number of passengers had left the car. They were gathered *en masse* around the portion of the grade crossing which intersected the lane. As he sprang down, banjo case in hand, the crowd caught sight of him, and gave him a couple of cheers.

"Now, then! Here comes Orpheus and his loot," cried a voice in the crowd. "Step lively, Orph, you're wanted."

For a moment the young man stared about him with ever-increasing fears for his own mental condition. Little by little a light broke in upon his brain.

A few yards only of track lay between the engine and the grade crossing. Squarely in the middle of the track at the crossing stood the obstruction, in full view. It was a small, antiquated pony phaeton drawn by — or rather attached to — a rotund white mare.

The animal was neither standing, the usual and approved atti-

tude of her kind, nor prostrate, as will sometimes happen by accident in the best-regulated rigs! She was sitting upon her glossy haunches, a calm, almost *blasé*, expression in her brown-green eyes. Beneath the expression of incipient *ennui*, the careful observer could detect a certain resolve, or obstinacy. Her fore feet, with their trim, slim fetlocks, were firmly braced against the rails.

The carriage was occupied by two women. One of them, a stout, elderly maiden-aunt-like person, engaged in making voluble explanations to a delighted crowd. The other, a Girl in White who leaned back among the cushions and laughed, in evident enjoyment of the situation.

At sight of the girl, Revere drew back with a little cry of astonishment under his breath. Then he ran forward, lifting his hat.

"Why, Miss Perry! I'm tremendously sorry to find you — ahem — delayed in this way. What is the trouble? Can I be of assistance?"

The pleasure which exuded from the young man's face was not reflected in that of the girl. She stopped laughing, drew herself up from the cushions and yielded him three slender fingers, which he was allowed to hold for a fraction of a second, after which they were immediately withdrawn.

"How do you do, Mr. Revere?" she said. "I'd no idea you were in this part of the country. No, so far as I am concerned, you can be of no assistance, I think. If the train people want to try any experiments, of course they are welcome to do it for the sake of getting the train in motion. Aunt Milly," she added, turning to her companion. "You have heard me speak of Mr. Revere. My aunt, Miss Blithe, Mr. Revere."

Miss Milly grasped his hand with a warmth which was in striking contrast to the chilly demeanor of her niece. "So glad to make your acquaintance, Mr. Weaver. Though I must say the circumstances are not those I would generally like to meet people under. Such an embarrassing position. I wouldn't have had it happen for the world. I never thought of Eliza behaving this way on a railroad or I should have been afraid to drive her. You see, Eliza has not sat down in years now, and we thought she'd quite forgotten it. She is an old circus horse, as you may imagine, though I'd no idea of that when I bought her. It isn't Eliza's

fault, really. She thinks she's doing perfectly right, you know. They taught her to sit down at the circus, and not to get up till she heard 'Yankee Doodle,' and she never will get up until she hears it. You can pull, or push, or whip her, anything. These poor men have tried everything to move her now, but she won't budge, except to that tune. When I first bought her she sat down all the time — so often that my niece positively refused to drive with me. I myself never drove out without a mouth organ under the seat there with the hitching strap, so that I could start her up whenever she became obstinate. But of late she never thinks of doing it and the coachman's children have carried off the mouth organ, leaving me helpless, though I must say I would have let them have it if they had asked me, as I never thought I should have to use it again, and they are really dear children, and a comfort to their mother, who was my former maid Susan."

"Lady," cried the conductor elbowing up. "We are ten minutes late, now!"

"Ten minutes late. How sorry I am! But, as I was just telling our friend Mr. Weaver here, this would never have happened if the coachman's children had not thoughtlessly removed the mouth organ from the place where I always keep it under the seat. It is most unfortunate in every way that Eliza should relapse just now, when she has not sat down in years. Things always do happen that way, though. I remember how it was the day poor Marion married. The house was crowded with guests and every one of the family had his hands full, so of course the pipes burst and flooded the kitchen, putting out the kitchen fire in the range and delaying the wedding breakfast — the cooking of it, at least. And then, after the ceremony, we had a thunderstorm and the lightning set fire to the barn, and an old tree that had weak roots was blown down and struck the house. And the groom had to turn out and help extinguish the barn, so that they couldn't go on their tour till the next day. It was just like Eliza remembering about sitting down this morning when I am on my way to the station to take the train to the city to see my old friend Amelia Lewes, intending to let my niece drive the phaeton home. But now I shall be afraid to let Barbara return alone, and Amelia Lewes leaves the city for California at one o'clock and I would give

the world to see her as I may never see her again for years, as she may stay out there for her husband's health, which is in a bad way through the weakness of his lungs, I believe — at least, the cough seems to point that way —"

"I am only going around the curve to the station," Revere suggested. "I am en route for the Pottertons. It would give me great pleasure to see your niece safely home."

He spoke in the most casually polite of tones, but a malicious something lurked in the eyes that looked at Miss Milly for an answer, and resolutely ignored Miss Milly's niece.

"There is no need in the world of any one accompanying me," said the young lady with great decision. "Eliza would not hurt a fly. I really prefer driving alone."

"That is like you, Barbara. You are always so brave," cried Miss Milly. "But remember, love, that I am older and more nervous. I wouldn't have a moment's peace, if I knew you were alone with Eliza now she is behaving this way. I wouldn't enjoy seeing Amelia, or anything, though I must say it is hardly an occasion to speak of enjoying yourself when you are saying good-by to one of your oldest friends, maybe for years, and knowing that she may be a widow when you do see her again, if you do. Still, I should be comfortable, at least, if I knew you had a man to protect you on the way home, and since Mr. Weaver so kindly offers, I accept for you, Barbara, and I insist on your availing yourself of his kindness."

"You are perfectly right, Miss Blithe. It would not be safe, to say the least, for Miss Perry to attempt to return home alone. And, far from inconveniencing me, it would be a great pleasure," urged the young man. He seated himself on a fallen tree trunk and stripped the cover from his banjo, keeping his eyes fixed on a portion of the landscape where, because of the angle of vision, it was impossible for them to encounter the eyes of Miss Milly's niece.

The young lady continued her protests, which were promptly drowned by a torrent of insistence from her aunt.

A moment later, a particularly vivacious "Yankee Doodle" enlivened the somnolent country atmosphere. Something in the exultant strains of the melody caused Miss Barbara to gather her pretty brows.

Eliza, however, was unfeignedly pleased. At the first notes her ears twitched, assuming an upright attitude suggestive of earnest attention. At "Along with Captain Goodwin," she turned her head and regarded the player with what appeared to be unqualified approval. Slowly gathering her forces together, she rose in a dignified manner at the first chorus, and drew the phaeton lightly from the track.

The spectators cheered. The train men shouted a warning "All aboard!" a general scramble for seats ensued and Miss Milly had just time enough to ensconce the new protector in the seat she herself had vacated before being assisted to the platform of the car.

When the last car of the six had rounded the curve and become lost to view, with Miss Milly's handkerchief fluttering like a white moth from one of the rear windows, Miss Perry gathered the reins.

"Do you mean," she said, addressing the empty air directly in front of the phaeton, "that you will continue to force yourself upon me the entire distance home?"

"I promised Miss Blithe to take you home in safety, and of course I mean to fulfil my promise," returned the empty air in a tone that was provokingly good-humored and content.

"But my aunt is gone now with a perfectly easy mind. A child of two could drive Eliza. Nothing could possibly happen to me and I really prefer going alone."

"I couldn't reconcile it with my conscience. You might meet with some accident, and then how could I face Miss Blithe? One never knows what will happen — especially in driving ex-circus horses. Had you one idea in a thousand when you drove Eliza out this morning that she would sit down on a railroad track in front of a train? I don't believe you had. You don't know a bit more about what she will do next."

"If you are determined to be so horrid, the best thing I can do is to get home as soon as possible," remarked the young lady, as she tapped Eliza into a brisk trot.

For some moments they drove on in silence. When the voice came again from the left hand of the phaeton, it had undergone a change. It was positively humble.

"Please don't be so hard on me," it pleaded. "The temptation was really too much — a whole ride with you when I'd been trying for weeks to see you, and couldn't. I had come down with the hope of seeing you at the Pottertons, and then, finding you there with this vacant seat, and Eliza — misbehaving — and your aunt nervous, it was more than a man could withstand. St. Anthony's trials were nothing to it."

As the whip-hand side had nothing apparently to add to the conversation, the left hand resumed:

"You don't know how sorry I was about that affair at the shore, and how I suffered after I cooled down. I admit it was all my fault, and I wrote to you begging you to forgive me. But you sent the letter back unopened. Isn't there something I can do to win back your good opinion? I'd do anything you say, no matter what."

"You might get out of the carriage and allow me to go on alone. I should really appreciate that," said the whip hand with instant readiness.

Whatever the left hand intended to say in reply went unsaid, for, at this point, the phaeton suddenly shot forward, half unseating the occupants, and rendering them temporarily speechless. For a moment it wavered, then slowly righted itself, and remained motionless. Eliza was sitting down again.

Revere fell back upon the seat and howled. The situation soon proved too much for his companion, also. They laughed together until Eliza cocked her ears in astonishment at this unseemly mirth.

"Good old Eliza!" cried the young man when he had partially recovered. "She knows a thing or two. She won't budge a step until I play 'Yankee Doodle,' and I swear I will never play a note of it until you invite me to accompany you the rest of the way."

"You won't take a mean advantage like that, surely?"

"Won't I though?"

"But that is most unfair."

"All is fair in war and — "

"Please play," she interrupted quickly.

"Not a note. Are you going to invite me?"

"I am not. I shall start Eliza without your help."

The attempt to set Eliza in motion by alternate kindness and discipline was a failure. Eliza remained placidly indifferent to either argument. Even a carrot, surreptitiously obtained by her mistress from a vegetable garden on one side of the way, failed to tempt her from her position. And Eliza had a weakness for carrots.

At the end of fifteen minutes Miss Barbara returned to her seat, exhausted in resources and patience.

"I suppose I must accede to your unjust demands," she said. "Or I shall be here permanently."

"Do you invite me of your own free will to accompany you home?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

"Cordially?"

"You never said it must be cordial," she protested.

"It must certainly be cordial," he responded firmly.

"Well. Cordially, then."

"I am entirely at your service," he answered, opening the banjo case.

Five minutes afterwards a rotund white mare jogged easily along a charming country lane drawing a phaeton which contained a man who laughed and a girl who protested, albeit not wrathfully, that something or other was a mean advantage and detestably unfair.

The Drowned Bedroom.*

BY RENE BACHE.

HE feelings with which I accepted Worthington's invitation were strangely mingled. He had declared himself unalterably my enemy, for no other reason than that I had won the woman he wanted to marry. She was absent from my side, at the sickbed of her father, and, being made aware of the situation, he asked me to come and spend a week at his house. He suggested that the visit might make the enforced absence of my wife more endurable, and the tone of his letter in a general way seemed to indicate that he desired to renew the friendship which had formerly existed between us.

Considering the fact that not more than six months had elapsed since he vowed toward me such bitter enmity, I was surprised at the cordiality of the communication. My intimacy with Worthington before my marriage had been close, and I had formed the notion that he was a person singularly tenacious of an idea once formed — in a word, that he would cling like death to a decision, whether wrong or right. That he would ever forgive me for the "injury" I had done him in marrying the girl he wanted — he used that term at the time, I remember — I did not imagine. But I had always liked him exceedingly, up to the period of our rivalry, and it was a matter of course that I should be glad to "make it up" with him. Indeed, it was owing chiefly to this desire on my part that I decided to visit him at his country house, which he called in humor the Moated Grange, perhaps because there was neither farm nor ditch connected with the estate.

The absurdity of the name was accentuated by the extremely modern aspect of the dwelling, which was constructed in accordance with Worthington's own peculiar notions. It was of very moderate size, but provided with every possible end-of-the-century improvement. Domestic architecture, indeed, was always a fad of his, and I well remember that as a schoolboy he used to make

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plans on his slate for the house he was going to build when he grew to be a man. Another notion of his was that he would have two small silver bars of appropriate shape and size to cool his tea — a beverage of which he was inordinately fond. That metal having a property of absorbing heat, he would use the bars alternately in his cup at meals. I may mention that the first thing I noticed on sitting down at table with him, immediately after my arrival at the Moated Grange, was two such silver bars which he used for his tea. He was a man who seldom, if ever, relinquished an idea.

There was something about his manner that struck me as odd. While cordial, it seemed to me a bit forced, though maybe the notion was imaginary on my part, inasmuch as I was feeling out of sorts myself. He was decidedly gay at dinner, talked more than was his wont, while I contented myself with listening, and he drank a little more wine than was good for him. When he showed me to my bedroom — I chose to retire early, being wearied by my railway journey — he had some joking remarks to make about the peculiarities of the apartment, which was entered oddly enough, by a flight of six steps leading down from the landing. That is to say, on crossing the threshold, one descended these six steps to the floor of the chamber. I thought it a strange mode of architectural construction, but, having had long experience of Worthington's eccentricities, it did not occur to me to wonder, knowing that he had built the house on his own plans. He had only finished it within a couple of months, by the way, and he told me that I was the first person to occupy it.

"You will find it very comfortable," he said, chuckling to himself as if over some jocular idea of his own which he did not see fit to communicate. "It is something quite original in the way of a bedroom, I flatter myself — built after a whim of my own, you know. Sleep tight, old man. If you want to light up in the night, just touch the button at the head of your couch."

He chuckled again as he left the room, and I found myself speculating as to the cause of his amusement while I undressed myself. In three minutes I was in bed, and, in no time at all, fast asleep.

I do not know what it was that roused me, but some hours later I became suddenly wide awake. Maybe it was a certain peculiar sensation of chill in the air that disturbed my slumber. I pulled

the heavy blankets closer round me — it was late in November — and tried to go to sleep again. But it was of no use; my eyelids would not stay closed, and I began to think and think in an annoyingly persistent way, while gazing absently at a spot of flickering light on the ceiling.

The spot had a curious sort of tremulousness, and presently it occurred to me to wonder where it came from and what was the cause of its flickering. It looked like a patch made by a moonbeam, but I did not see where the latter entered. For some time it amused me to speculate on the nature of the phenomenon, but my surmises did not lead me to any satisfactory conclusion. I gave it up at length and turned over, with the intention of wooing reluctant repose, when, being nearer to the edge of the bed than I had supposed, my right arm fell outside. It plunged up to the elbow into ice-cold water.

I was extremely startled and even alarmed. Hastily leaning over toward the other side of my couch, I stretched out my arm again. It was no illusion. The bed was surrounded by water up to the height of the mattress, or nearly so.

I lay back and tried to think. On what conceivable theory could such a condition of affairs be accounted for? Who ever heard of a bedroom, in the second story of a dwelling-house, flooded in such a manner? And the water was unquestionably rising; already I felt the mattress beneath me growing wet.

Just then I remembered what Worthington had said about touching the button at the head of the bed in case I wanted light. I groped anxiously for the knob, pressed it and pressed it again, but no illumination followed. Then I remembered having noticed, when I retired, two knobs, one above the other. I groped again, touched the upper one this time — the lower one was for shutting off the electricity — and instantly the room was flooded with light from eight or ten Edison bulbs which were attached to a pair of chandeliers overhead.

The sight which met my gaze was by no means reassuring. As I had supposed, the entire room was flooded with water, which was already nearly high enough to overflow the bed. It was up to the third drawer of the dressing table, and three or four chairs were floating about. I cannot imagine a more extraordinary scene.

Encouraged to action now that my surroundings were made visible, I jumped out of bed into the icy water, and, nearly frozen by its chill, waded to the door, ascending the six steps to reach it. I found it locked, evidently from the outside. Surely, it was very strange. I shook the door with all my might, but it did not budge. Standing on the threshold, at the top of the flight, I was some distance above the level of the water, but it was not a point of vantage from which to force the lock.

By this time I had begun to be really frightened. I called out repeatedly at the top of my lungs, but my voice died away without eliciting any response. Something cold seemed to take a grip on my heart, and, looking down, I saw that the water was over the bed. It was evidently rising fast.

Summoning my courage, I descended the six steps and waded across the room to the windows, which, I then noticed for the first time, were at an extraordinary height from the floor. There were two of them and I tried them in succession; but I could hardly reach them, having nothing to stand upon, and it was obvious that the shutters were securely barred, though the sashes were lowered from the top as if for ventilation. Some minutes of frantic effort convinced me that there was nothing to be accomplished.

It was now for the first time that a suggestion of foul play came into my mind. The idea struck me like a thunderbolt; it was indeed the only conceivable explanation of the situation. Worthington, who had sworn eternal enmity toward me, had not forgotten his vow. I was at the mercy of a madman. Pretending to repent his hostility, he had invited me to his house for the purpose of destroying me by a method frightful in its originality. He might easily have murdered me in some other way, but, having resolved upon the deed, it was characteristic of him to select a method wholly novel and hitherto unthought of. I was to die by drowning, and as slowly as possible. How well I understood now the significance of that chuckle of his as he had left me a few hours earlier. "Built after a whim of my own," he had said, speaking of the bedroom assigned to my occupancy. Why, it was into a trap, constructed expressly to capture myself, that I had fallen. Half mad with fear and rage, I made my way to the steps again, the water up to my waist, and, trembling with cold, climbed out

upon the top step. Then beating the panels with my fists, I yelled and screamed in my despair, alternately cursing my treacherous host and calling upon him to have mercy and spare my life.

I suppose this must have continued for five minutes or so, though it seemed hours to me, when I thought I heard a noise outside the door and listened. It was a man's footstep, and as it approached I recognized it as Worthington's.

"What's the matter, old man?" he said. "Got a nightmare?"

"Have mercy, Worthington," I cried. "For God's sake have mercy!"

"It's a nightmare, sure enough," I heard him mutter. "He's walking in his sleep."

"Open the door!" I wailed.

"How can I open it?" he replied. "The catch is on the inside, just above the knob. Press it back with your thumb."

With trembling fingers I obeyed him; the door, released by the spring-catch — one of Worthington's freaks of ingenuity — flew open, and I fell outward, half-fainting. He caught me in his arms.

"Why, what's the mat—?" he began, when, as he gazed down into the brilliantly lighted room, an expression of the utmost astonishment came over his face. Then he began to swear with much elaborateness and emphasis.

The situation began in some measure to dawn upon me, as he ran back to his own room and, returning with a pocket-flask, poured half of its contents down my throat. The fiery stuff nearly choked me.

"You didn't mean to murder me, then?" I said, as soon as I could regain my breath.

"Murder you!" he echoed. "Ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha!" I thought he would have a fit with laughing. Then he began to apologize with the utmost humbleness, saying that he could never make adequate amends for the unfortunate accident that had occurred. He still feared that I might have pneumonia in consequence of the exposure to which I had been subjected. After wrapping me in warm blankets, putting my feet in a tub of hot water, and making me swallow the rest of the whiskey, he explained in a few words what had happened.

"In putting up this house," he said, "my notion was to build it

around a bathroom. That was my bathroom which you occupied to-night. I have two or three other tubs for winter use, but for summer I wanted a tank that my guests and I could swim in. In winter, according to my idea, it was to be converted into a bedroom, thus providing an extra chamber for guests. To shut off the water, carpet the floor, and put in the necessary furniture was simple enough. I confess that I thought it rather a clever notion. You will have noticed that the walls are tiled, and you will now understand the peculiar construction of the apartment, the steps leading down into it, and the height of the windows. The arrangements are such that the water cannot rise higher than five feet, so that you could not have been drowned, though you would certainly have been frozen to death had your cries for help not awakened me. I can never forgive myself for the misfortune that has occurred. In some way, which I will find out about in the morning, the valve shutting off the water must have opened, flooding the room. There is only one thing I cannot understand, and that is why you should have jumped to the conclusion that I had designs upon your life."

"You swore everlasting enmity, you know, Dick," I said, weakly.

He laughed long and loud, like his old self. "I meant it, too," he replied. "But changed circumstances have caused me to forgive the outrage you committed in cutting me out with a certain young lady. I am now engaged to be married to Miss Evelyn Goldthwaite, whom I believe you know."

"I do indeed, Dick," I said. "She's a charming girl, and I wish you all the happiness you deserve."

That is all of the story. I suffered nothing from my extraordinary adventure beyond a bad cold in the head. It is hardly worth mentioning, but I may as well explain that the curious flickering light which I saw on the ceiling on that memorable night was merely a moonbeam that entered through the upper part of one of the window-shutters and was reflected by the water.

Out of Court.*

BY VIRGINIA YEAMAN REMNITZ.

S Lem entered the house the desolation of it simply appalled him. He had supposed that friends would soften this home coming; that Rose Temple would manage, somehow, to dispel the gloom. But there had been no one at the station to meet him save Jim, the farm-hand, who brought the horse and wagon.

And now Jim came into the hall and stood furtively shuffling his feet. He found it hard to say what he had on his mind, especially since this gaunt, strange-eyed man, who started when a body spoke to him, scarcely seemed like the vigorous young master who had gone away in the early spring.

But the strain of silence became at last more difficult than speech and the farm-hand muttered:

"I'm goin' now."

"Going where?"

Lemuel Bassett turned suddenly as he spoke. His voice was harsh, and his haggard face loomed white in the dusk.

Jim backed hastily away toward the door. He looked scared.

"Goin' away from here!" And with that he actually ran out of the house and down the gravel path.

Lem stood glowering after the deserter in silence. Then he glanced about the hall slowly.

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* The writer of this story received a cash prize of $125 in THE BLACK CAT story contest ending February 26, 1902.

Everything had a neglected look. It was clear that no woman had been there to brighten and arrange the place for him.

The door into the living-room stood open. And Lem saw that the chair which had been overturned when he sprang up to meet the constables still lay forlornly on its side, with its cushion fallen to the floor.

And the silence! He had not realized it would be so still without his father. The whole thing was like a dream — a very evil dream.

Still, he was free. As he stood there he remembered the moment of acquittal — the brief phrase of the foreman which had released him from a spell of unimaginable horror. He remembered the feel of the air, the sunshine. And he also remembered what at the time he scarcely noted — the silence of the crowd in the court room, the failure of any one to come forward and take him by the hand.

Lem walked slowly into the living-room and picked up the overturned chair. It was the one his father had always used, and at this simple act the sense of his loss, the memory of how it had come, rose suddenly up to confront him. He sank down on the faded old cushion he had just replaced and there, with head dropped low, sat huddled forlornly, no sign of life in his frame save its heavy breathing, and only the reflection of dark thoughts on his face.

But that was not for long. The man stirred and straightened himself. Moods such as these must be driven away — Lem realized the danger of them. They were relics of the interminable months he had spent in confinement and suspense — shackles from which no decree of court could free him.

"I'm not the man I was," he reflected, "but hard work and fresh air will soon set me up again. If there was only anybody to speak to — if Rose had come — "

Rose, at summons of the thought, came in such manner as women must to the men who love them.

She was small and quick, an impulsive, passionately loyal bit of humanity. Occasionally her quick wit outstripped her warm heart, but always the flush of tenderness that followed more than compensated for the hasty word.

Lem's scowl turned to a smile as he held her close to his thought. But of a sudden the tangible man cried out for something more than this subtle inner possession.

"Rose! Rose!" he groaned, "I thought I could depend upon you!"

That was the first day. The next he went down to the village. No one had come to the farmhouse meantime, and Lem's face was set as he entered the town and drew near the general store, which was also the post-office.

A number of men were hanging about. They stopped talking as young Bassett drove up, and stared at him curiously. But, as he glanced them over, some averted their eyes.

"Hello, boys!"

Lem strode through them quickly, followed by a low murmur of response — the utterance of lenient souls. Some kept silence, and wondered whether he noted it.

But among those in the store was one to whom the young farmer, despite all, hastened with outstretched hand.

The man fell to tearing open a paper.

"How are you, Lem?" he said, running his eye down the printed columns.

Lem drove homewards rapidly. The whirl of dust he raised was in harmony with his whirling, clouded thought.

It was unthinkable, unbelievable, yet it must be true. There was no other explanation of his reception by these lifetime neighbors and friends but this — they believed him guilty! They believed that he, who had always been one of the most respected and, despite his quick temper, one of the best liked men in the community, had murdered the good old father with whom he lived, the only living soul to whom he was bound by ties of close kinship, the one companion of his daily home life.

Did Rose Temple believe this of him? She had made no sign, but her family might prevent that. Lem whipped up the horse. He had expected Rose to send him some word — it would have been like her to come.

There was a cloud of dust ahead and a buggy moving through it towards Lem. He scarcely heeded it until time to turn out; then he looked up and into the face of Rose Temple.

The girl was with her father. At touch of Lem's eyes she turned crimson and her own grew large and piteous, while her lips quivered, as over half-formed words. But her father struck his horse with the whip and the buggy flew by.

Had she rebuffed him? Had she tried to speak? Lem did not know. His head swam, his thoughts groped in a cloud. Her father had lashed the horse on. Perhaps the girl was not acting of her own volition.

He went into the house half blindly. It was hot and close. The sun streamed in through the unsheltered windows and, despite the one redeeming fact of cleanliness, everything looked forlorn and forbidding.

As on the day before, Lem sat down in his father's armchair and let his head drop low on his breast. There was a great deal to do on the farm, but it scarcely seemed to matter. He must try to think it all out clearly.

The terrible deed itself, as it chanced, was all too easy to picture, and the constant mental rehearsal of it had become a habit with him. But there seemed to be no clue to the perpetrator.

Yet, because suspicion could be fastened upon no else, must he live on under its horrible shadow?

When Lem came out of his dark reverie an hour had passed, and again he reflected that this habit must be shaken off. If he had but some companionship, it would be easier.

For some weeks after that first appearance in the village young Lemuel Bassett continued to come and go, greeting those who greeted him, but seldom speaking, save when necessary.

By degrees, however, his appearance became less and less frequent. And one day the postmaster observed to Bill Saunders that Lem Bassett hadn't called for his mail in two weeks, and that several copies of the *County Recorder* were waiting for him.

Thereupon Bill, whose farm adjoined that of the recluse, volunteered to play carrier, and an hour later Lem, himself unseen, watched Bill draw his horses up and thrust the papers into the box on top of the gate.

Simple as was the act, it gave the solitary man a pleasant sense of surprise. It was a touch of comradeship, a token of consideration from at least one fellow-creature.

"You can never tell about people," he said to himself. "Ever since old man Saunders went daft over that boundary quarrel I thought Bill felt ugly toward us. And here he is putting himself out for me!"

In fact, the little service took on a very lovely aspect. Whenever Lem felt his friendless state too keenly he would picture to himself Bill Saunders drawing his team up at the gate and leaning over to deliver the mail.

Not long afterwards Bill found, tucked inside the box, an order upon the general store for various necessaries.

"I guess that means Lem's going to keep himself at home," he thought and thereupon felt something astir within his big, warm heart. And the next morning, when he stopped at the Bassett gate, he dismounted and went up the gravel walk to the porch laden with parcels.

At the door he hesitated. A sudden shyness came upon him. He raised his hand to knock, but dropped it again. Then, putting the bundles down on a bench, he hurried away.

A few days later, however, a loud rapping at the front door startled Lem. He was in the kitchen, eating his dinner. He stopped short and listened.

It came again. Lem's heart seemed to knock as loud. Then the visitor tried the door, opened it, and took a step within.

Lem leaped suddenly to his feet. He stood staring, like a man at bay; then a strange look came to his face — a cunning, hunted look. He turned quietly, stole out of the back door and, creeping along beside the house for a way, darted quickly into hiding behind a clump of bushes.

When he thought of it afterwards he wondered at himself. Why had he hidden? Why had he not gone to the door? He frowned a little, and his face darkened with some faint fear as to the significance of his conduct. But, after all, it did not greatly matter. And perhaps he would not do it the next time.

Nevertheless, he did. Returning from the stable one afternoon he saw the Widow Martin coming up the road. He slipped behind his bushes until she should go past; but she turned in at the gate. Then he crouched down on the ground and stayed there until her knocking ceased and she went away again.

It was the night of that day that he had his dream. As has been said, the whole scene of the awful event from which his troubles dated had become very vivid to him through constant imaginative rehearsal. Now he rehearsed it while he slept — but with one difference. He himself was the chief actor!

When he awoke he was dripping with the sweat of mortal fear and horror. And it was some time before he could realize that the experience had not been an actual one.

The next morning he remembered his dream with a shudder, and all day it hung about the background of his thoughts. Toward evening, however, it pressed itself forward — when it seemed not so much the memory of a dream as the subconscious living over of an actual event.

"This is bad," said Lem to himself. And going out into the kitchen he dashed cold water over his face and head. Then he went and sat on the porch while the darkness deepened.

"It will wear off my mind by degrees," he muttered, watching the new moon as it brightened out of the west and hung shimmering over a lake of fading golden light.

A few minutes later he realized that his thoughts had changed.

"I must have been in such a daze afterwards I didn't remember about it," they were arguing. "Lord! I wish I never had remembered! I must have been crazy when I did it."

He caught himself up peremptorily.

"I'll stop this fool nonsense!" he exclaimed aloud. And thereupon fell to arguing it out in his own mind.

"It was only a dream. I'll forget it to-morrow.

"That was the way the memory of it came back. I remember the dream — *but how I remember that the dream was true.*"

In his absorption over the strange problem Lem's head had sunk, as was its wont now, low upon his breast, and the beauty of the dying day was forgotten.

There was the lightest footfall on the gravel path; he did not hear it. It ceased, and a slender figure paused at the foot of the steps.

"Lem! Oh, Lem!"

The voice was just the simple utterance of a soul. It breathed out of the darkness like a spirit disembodied by sheer force of love

and pity and longing. And the crescent moon, hanging low now, paused at the rim of the world to see.

Lem raised his head. He recognized the little slender figure. A flush of ecstacy ran through him.

"Rose!" And he was swaying on his feet.

She stirred toward him. But suddenly he remembered; and one of his long arms shot out with a repellant gesture.

"Go away!" he cried harshly. "I am guilty. I did it. Go away!"

"She was scared," he said a moment later, looking after the flying form. "Poor little thing, she was scared."

At least, she was gone. And the young moon was gone also. It was quite dark.

"Murder will out," was Lem's reflection as he went into the house. But it was quickly followed by another — one that came like a vision of terror.

"They'll be after me again. I wonder whether they'll come tonight."

He stood at the foot of the steps, looking back toward the door. His face was ghastly. He thought he had escaped that; he was safe, at least.

"Safe! You're safe, now, whatever happens." The words came back to him vaguely. "You can't be tried for this again, you know."

When the lawyer told him that he had believed himself innocent, and the words made little impression. Now they brought a ray of light to his thought.

But it was a ray dimmed by doubt. To Lem's untrained mind the merciful provision seemed unreasonable — perhaps the lawyer had been mistaken; perhaps his own memory was at fault.

"I guess they could, if I told it myself. And if the law didn't do it, maybe the people around here —"

"I'll not let them do it! I'll not let them get me for that!"

He muttered the words sullenly. Then came his inspiration. It was the opening of a door in a blank wall, and he ran upstairs almost like a boy.

At the threshold of his father's bedroom, however, he paused. He seldom went in there because of the scene for which that cham-

ber was the setting. But until the dream and the memory came to him he had entered it in sorrow, rather than in fear.

When he opened the door he glanced quickly over at the bed — it was very white and very empty.

He raised himself to tiptoe.

"I came in just this way," he murmured.

For so the dream had it, and the memory that followed the dream.

Suddenly Lem straightened himself. His distorted face fell into hard, sober lines.

"Stop your fool nonsense," he muttered. And going over to the clothes press he took an old revolver out of the top drawer.

In his own room he cleaned, oiled and loaded the weapon. It had not been used for a long time, but it was evidently in working order. After all was done he slipped it into an inner pocket and went down stairs on to the porch again.

When he heard them coming to take him, the little friend in his pocket would procure his freedom.

Several times he pressed his hand over the revolver to assure himself it was there, and each time he touched it the sense of security grew stronger within him.

However, they did not come that night. And the next morning he went with the greatest caution about his necessary duties. The only fear he felt was that of being taken unaware, and his eyes were always on the go from side to side, while his hearing was like the hearing of a deer which flies the huntsman.

A few days afterwards the sound of a wagon outside drew him, early in the afternoon, to the living room, the windows of which were carefully screened by closed shutters. From behind these he could see without being seen.

It was Bill Saunders with the weekly paper. When Lem went out to get it, his glance stole up and down the road; his whole manner was furtive, alert. He would have run to cover at first sight or sound of human kind.

Within the house he tore the paper open eagerly. It might contain some mention of his confession; some hint of the state of mind into which it had thrown the neighborhood.

But there was no allusion to it whatever. And the only item

of news which particularly interested him was that which recorded the death of old Mr. Saunders.

"Poor Bill! He's had a hard row to hoe with his father gone daft these five years," Lem brooded, his head sinking on his breast. "I wonder he feels as kind to me as he does, since that old boundary quarrel did it."

That all belonged to the past, but it led to thoughts of the present situation. The memory of that clutched the man and pulled him roughly out of his abstraction.

He couldn't afford to sit there wool gathering. They might come at any time — they might be coming now.

Perhaps some faint sound down the road had suggested the fear. As he rose to his feet he listened consciously and caught a distant, confused murmur of voices.

It was a very strange feeling that came over him then; a feeling which few men ever experience. But the hunted animal knows it when the noise of the pack assails his ear.

Like such an animal, he quivered where he stood. The instinct of flight came upon him, but reason tugged more strongly. And there was the little friend in his pocket. He clutched at it eagerly.

The voices were louder. He went to the shuttered side window and looked out.

What he saw was a crowd of people, men and boys, hurrying along the road. They were not far from the house now. Their voices were excited and loud; they were calling his name; they seemed in haste. Presently a couple of young fellows dashed ahead and raced together for the gate.

Amid all his visions of dread there had been none which resembled this, none which sickened his heart as did the reality. He had fancied the coming of silent, stern executioners. Despite all their aversion he could not have believed his neighbors would come thus eagerly — lightly even — for his taking.

Something in the very awfulness, the utter sorrowfulness of his position strengthened and steadied him. Sometimes an experience of supreme tension acts upon the mind as a chemical may upon a cloudy solution, clarifying, and precipitating all impurities. And as young Lemuel Bassett stood looking out upon those shouting,

hurrying people, the black illusion which had followed his dream cleared from his mind.

This inward change was subtly reflected in his bearing. It became firm, self-poised. And his hand, which had been clutched over the revolver, fell to his side.

"I'll not do it!" he ejaculated. "It's a coward's trick. I'll go clean, anyway."

They were very near now, calling, gesticulating. Lem straightened himself and turned from the window. He would meet them at the door.

His face was colorless. But the light in his eye was clear and his head was well up.

So fixed was his whole mind upon the one thought that he did not see the little figure which stood in the doorway between kitchen and living room. But the gasping of his name made him turn.

Rose could scarcely speak, so fast had she run across lots to outstrip the others. But her whole person was love-illumined; her look clung to the man like a caress.

For a moment he forgot the people without, he scarcely knew whether the girl were a vision or an actual presence.

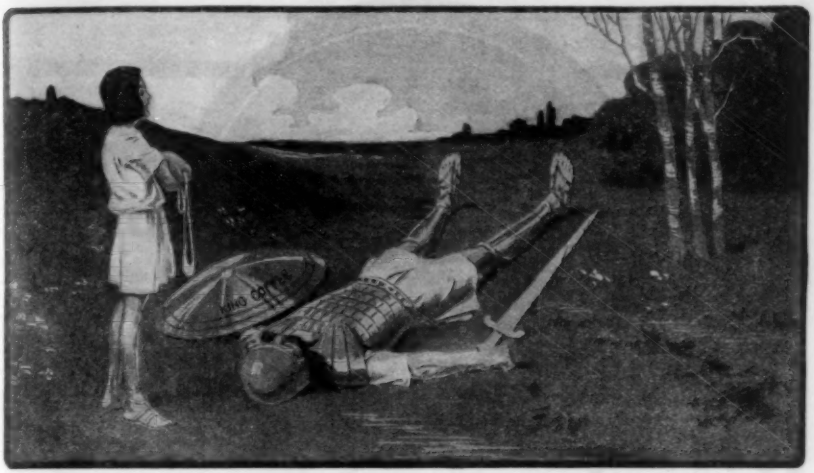
Then came the sound of running steps on the gravel. Everything became clear and real to his vibrant senses.

"Rose! Rose!" he cried, "I am innocent. Believe me, Rose, and I can bear it!"

The girl sprang toward him; she clasped the thin hands together within her own and covered them with kisses.

"They all know it, Lem!" she sobbed. "Bill's father confessed when he was dying. It was that old quarrel — they are coming to tell you, Lem! They —"

The door burst open, and she was pressed away from him. But amid all the confusion of greeting, amid all the pressure of hands and warmth of insistent friendship, Lem felt the girl's throbbing presence as though she were at his side. And the current of her love pulsed through his being.



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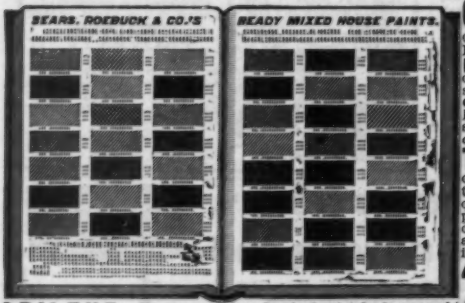

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High Priests of the Occult Reveal Jealously Guarded Secrets of Years — A Wonderful New Book by Prominent New York Men.

A wonderful new book, entitled "The Secret of Power," has just been issued, at an expense of over $5,000, by one of the leading colleges of the City of New York. This book is from the pen of the ablest specialists of modern times. The authors gave away the copyright on condition that 10,000 copies should be distributed to the public free of charge. The Columbia Scientific Academy is now complying with this contract, and until the edition of 10,000 copies is exhausted you can get a copy of this book absolutely free. The book is profusely illustrated with the most expensive half-tone engravings. It is full of wonderful secrets and startling surprises, and thoroughly explains the real source of the power of personal influence. It fully and completely reveals the fundamental principles of success and influence in every walk of life. The hidden mysteries of personal magnetism, will-power and scientific character reading are explained in an intensely interesting manner. Two secret methods of personal influence are described, which positively enable any intelligent person to exercise a marvellous influence and control over any one whom he may wish. These methods are entirely new and have never before been made public. A reporter has tried them personally and can vouch for their wonderful power.

The book also describes absolutely certain methods by which you can read the character, secrets and lives of every one you meet. No one can deceive you. You can tell what vocation is best for you to follow. You can know the secret power by which minds of human beings are charmed and fascinated. The newest, latest and best system of physical and mental culture and magnetic healing is fully explained and illustrated by beautiful half-tone engravings. No such book has ever before been published. No such wonderful information has ever before been placed in the hands of the public. On account of the mighty power and influence placed in one's hands by this book, the Legislature of the State of New York debated whether or not the State ought to permit its promiscuous circulation; but it was finally decided the good it would accomplish would greatly overbalance the ill, and its distribution was not interfered with.

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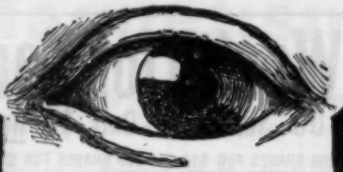

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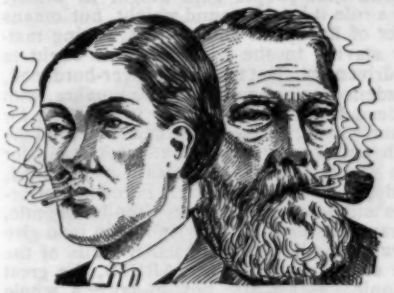

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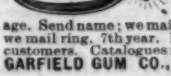

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Sends Free Trial Packages By Mail to All Who Write—Gives Instant Relief.

There is no question that all diseases can be cured by his marvelous discovery after having talked with people whom he has cured quickly

No Man Is Lost — There Is a Sure Cure for Every Sick and Ailing Man or Woman — Dr. Ferris.

and safely of Rheumatism, Catarrh, Diabetes, Lost Vitality, Debility, Ailments of Women, Kidney and Liver Disease, Lung and Stomach Trouble, Consumption, Constipation, Neuralgia, Bronchitis, Insomnia, Blood Poison, Anemia, Eczema or Salt Rheum, Locomotor Ataxia, Asthma, Epilepsy, Piles, Chronic Diarrhea, All Skin Diseases, Heart Disease. It matters not what the disease nor of how long standing, nor how many doctors or remedies have failed. To weak, weary women he has brought the light and happiness of health. For worn-out men he has relighted the sparkling vitality of youth. He has cured the crippled and healed the sick.

The doctor sends free trial treatment to every sick or ailing person who sends him their name and address, telling him what they wish to be cured of. Every sick and suffering person should avail themselves of the marvelous skill he gives them absolutely free. Thousands have saved a sick friend's life by sending him their name. For the benefit of any who wish to address him personally we give his private address, Dr. C. Sargent Ferris, 4072 Elektron Building, Ft. Wayne, Ind., for although the demands on his time are something enormous, he gives his personal attention to every letter.

MORPHINE And All Drug Addictions Absolutely Cured

We Will Send a Trial Treatment FREE of Cost if You Will Write Us.
All Correspondence Strictly Confidential.

THE ALL SAINTS CO., Room 813, Mutual Reserve Bldg., New York City

MORPHINE

OPIUM and **LAUDANUM** habits cured by **OPACURA**, a painless home treatment, endorsed and used by leading physicians. **A TRIAL TREATMENT** sufficient to convince you it **WILL CURE**, sent **FREE**, with book of testimonials sealed. Correspondence Confidential.

OPA SPECIALTY CO., DEPT. A, SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

OPIUM

MORPHINE and LIQUOR Habits Cured. Sanatorium Established 1875. Thousands having failed elsewhere have been cured by us. Treatment can be taken at home. Write **The Dr. J. L. Stephens Co., Dept. B 9, Lebanon, Ohio.**

MYSELF CURED

I will gladly inform anyone addicted to **COCAINE, MORPHINE, OPIUM OR LAUDANUM,** of a never-failing harmless Home Cure. Address **MRS. M. I. BALDWIN, P. O. Box 1212, Chicago, Ill.**

LADIES

to do piece work at their homes. We furnish all material and pay from $7 to $12 weekly. Experience unnecessary. Send stamped envelope to ROYAL CO., Desk B. C., 34 Monroe St., Chicago, Ills.

TELL FORTUNES

with **WIZARD CARDS.** Future truthfully revealed. To convince you we will send cards Free for stamp. **C. Velaro, 208 W. 42d St., New York**

He thinks he lives, but he's a dead one. No person is really alive whose liver is dead. During the winter most people spend nearly all their time in warm, stuffy houses or offices or workshops. Many don't get as much exercise as they ought, and everybody knows that people gain weight in winter. As a rule it is not sound weight, but means a lot of flabby fat and useless, rotting matter staying in the body when it ought to be driven out. But the liver is over-burdened, deadened—stops work. There you are, with a dead liver, and right now is the time for resurrection. Wake up the dead! Get all the filth out of your system, and get ready for the winter's trials with clean, clear blood, body, brain free from bile. Force is dangerous and destructive unless used in a gentle, persuasive way, and the right plan is to give new strength to the muscular walls of the bowels, and stir up the liver to new life and work with CASCARETS, the great system cleaner, disinfectant and bowel tonic. Get a 50c box to-day—a whole month's treatment—and see how quickly you will be brought back to new life. Sample and booklet free. Address Sterling Remedy Co., Chicago or New York. 498

25c CARPET OFFER

This is a good, heavy, 36-inch width GRANITE CARPET.

New floral design; red, green or wine background with handsome contrasting colors in floral design.

NO BETTER WEARING CARPET MADE.

OUR OFFER: Send us this ad., state whether you wish red, green or wine ground and number of yards wanted, enclose 25 cents per yard, and we will send the carpet to you with the understanding that if you do not find it perfectly satisfactory and about one-half the price charged by dealers in your town, you can return it to us at our expense and we will immediately return your money, together with any freight or express charges paid by you.

BIG CARPET SAMPLES FREE. If you want to see samples before ordering, cut this ad. out and send to us and we will send you at once 36 Color Sample Plates taken from 1½-yard lengths, also our COMPLETE CARPET CATALOGUE OF EVERYTHING IN BRUSSELS, VELVET, AXMINSTER, ALSO ALL WOOL AND HALF WOOL INGRAINS AND GRANITE CARPETS, ART SQUARES, RUGS, ETC., and all at prices heretofore unknown. The catalogue also explains how all samples are furnished free. Catalogue is free, write for it. Address,

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Pay After Received Offer! One Year's Free Trial! 25-Years' Binding Guarantee! All explained in our FREE MUSIC CATALOGUE. We sell pianos from $89.00 to $165.00, the equal of instruments sold by dealers and agents at DOUBLE our prices. High Grade Violins, Guitars and Mandolins at $2.45 and upwards. For our beautifully illustrated, big complete Music Catalogue, lowest prices, free trial and pay after received offer, cut this ad out and mail to SEARS, ROEBUCK & CO., Chicago, Ill.

To Cure Drunkards.

A Simple Way to Cure Any Drunkard Against His Will.

By using the new odorless and tasteless remedy which is placed in the coffee or food any drunkard can be cured. Anyone can use it without the drunkard ever knowing it. It

MRS. SAMUEL BOYD.

does its work so silently and surely that while the devoted wife, sister, daughter or mother looks on, the drunkard is cured even against his will.

Every person who has a loved one who is a slave to drink ought to give him this remedy at once.

Mrs. Samuel Boyd says: "With Golden Specific I cured my husband of drinking. I put it in his coffee and after that he could not drink liquor or bear to be where he could smell it."

Write to Dr. J. W. Haines, 4220 Glenn Building, Cincinnati, Ohio, and he will send you a free trial package which will show you how simple it is to use and how positive is its cure.

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CURED THROUGH THE FEET

Magic Foot Drafts will be sent to every sufferer in America FREE on Approval.

TRY THEM

Send no money — we only ask your name — and we will send you, prepaid, a pair of the celebrated Magic Foot Drafts, which have cured thousands of the most unfortunate rheumatic sufferers in the world. If you are satisfied with the relief they give you then send us one dollar. If not don't send us a cent. We know there's comfort and happiness in every pair, and we want you to have them; that's why we are willing to take our pay after the work is done.

The drafts are worn on the soles of the feet because the circulatory and nervous systems are most easily reached at this point, but they cure rheumatism in every part of the body by drawing out the poison from the system. A booklet is sent free with the drafts — all without a cent in advance. Write today to Magic Foot Draft Co., 149 Oliver Building, Jackson, Mich.

Catarrh, Foul Breath.

If You Continually K'hawk and Spit And There is a Constant Dripping From the Nose into the Throat, If You Have Foul, Sickening Breath, That is Catarrh.

Large Trial Package Free — Quickly Cures.

Any person having catarrh always has a bad breath. The sense of smell and taste are nearly always totally destroyed in time so that the person who has catarrh does not realize how loathsome their disease is. They continue their K'hawking-K'hawking and spitting and spitting about promiscuously until they are shunned by everyone, and the sight of them is enough to make a well person sick.

Gauss' Catarrh Cure gives wonderful relief, especially in those chronic cases where the mucus drops down the throat and lungs, sickening the stomach, and leads to many diseases, including Consumption.

Catarrh is a deep-seated disease, and local applications, inhalations, sprays, ointments or salves will do no good. A large trial package mailed free that will convince you. Send name and address at once to C. E. Gauss, 779 Main St., Marshall, Mich.

EIGHT DOLLARS AND NINETY-FIVE CENTS

BUYS OUR HIGH GRADE, HIGH ARM, GUARANTEED, FIVE-DRAWER, SOLID POLISHED ANTIQUE OAK, DROP HEAD CABINET SEROCO SEWING MACHINE, the equal of sewing machines that cost twice the money elsewhere.

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$10.45 buys our 5-drawer, drop head cabinet, celebrated **NEW QUEEN** sewing machine.

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THE ABOVE MACHINES ARE ALL OUR OWN MAKE. WE SELL EVERY OTHER MAKE OF SEWING MACHINE ON THE MARKET AT CUT PRICES.

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4-drawer, drop head	WHEELER & WILSON	$26.00
5-drawer, drop head	WHITE	$23.00
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These and many other high grade machines beautifully illustrated and fully described, the parts, mechanism and special features, in our big, new, free Sewing Machine Catalogue. You must write for it. If you mention the name of this paper we will give you the names of a number of your own neighbors to whom we have sold machines, so you can see and examine your neighbors' machines, learn how they are pleased with them and how much money we saved them.

Three Months' Free Trial.

WE CAN SURELY SAVE YOU $10.00 TO $20.00 ON ANY KIND of a MACHINE.

THREE MONTHS' FREE TRIAL ON ANY SEWING MACHINE ORDERED.

For Free Sewing Machine Catalogue, the most wonderful price offerings ever made, our liberal terms, pay after received offer and three months' free trial plan, cut this ad. out and mail to us, or send a postal card, ask for Free Sewing Machine Catalogue, and say what paper or magazine you saw this notice in. Address, SEARS, ROEBUCK & CO., CHICAGO.

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PAINLESS AND PERMANENT **A Trial Treatment Free.** **HOME CURE**

Sent to anyone addicted to the use of Morphine, Opium or other drug habit. Contains Vital Principle heretofore unknown and lacking in all others. We restore the nervous and physical systems and thus remove the cause. Confidential correspondence invited from all.

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Don't ruin your stomach with a lot of useless drugs and patent medicines. Send to Prof. F. J. Kellogg, 1486 Kellogg Building, Battle Creek, Michigan, for a free trial package of a treatment that will reduce your weight to normal. The treatment is perfectly safe, natural and scientific. It takes off the big stomach, gives the heart freedom, enables the lungs to expand naturally, and you will feel a hundred times better the first day you try this wonderful home treatment.

FAT

How to reduce it.

Mr. Hugo Horn, 344 E. 66th St., New York City, writes: "It reduced my weight 46 lbs. 3 years ago, & I have not gained an ounce since." Purely vegetable & harmless as water. Any one can make it at home at little expense. No starving. No sickness. We will mail a box of it & full particulars in a plain sealed package to any address free of charge.

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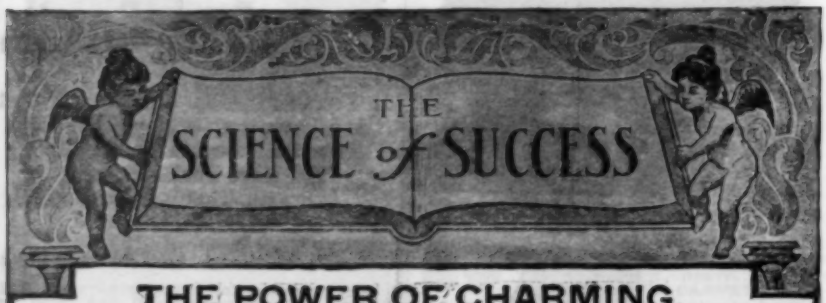

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We thoroughly explain the power of charming, the art of fascination, the secret of magnetic control. We will reveal to you all the hidden mysteries of personal magnetism, hypnotism, magnetic healing, will power, nerve force, etc. We teach you how to cure all diseases and bad habits without aid of drugs or medicine,—positively and absolutely. You can learn at home in a few days and wield an indescribable charm and influence over your friends and associates entirely without their knowledge. You will be delighted, mystified and astonished at the marvelous power you can exert.

ELEGANTLY ILLUSTRATED BOOK FREE.

Write to-day for our new book and test for yourself the remarkable power of personal magnetism. No matter how dark your future may seem, no matter what discouragements you have met in the past, do not despair, but write for our book and learn how to be successful. Learn the only absolutely certain and sure way by which every person of ordinary intelligence may gain position and power and get out of life the wealth and happiness which his Creator intended he should enjoy.

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About 1,000 Illustrations, Nearly 1,000 Pages of Reading Matter
Health, Strength, Energy, Muscular Development, Strong Stomach, Lungs and Heart.
All Can Be Yours for a Few Persistent Efforts.

The PHYSICAL CULTURE MAGAZINE has been established for four years. It now has a sale of over 160,000 monthly. Heretofore it has sold at 5 cts. per copy, 50 cts. a year. Beginning with January the price will be 10 cts. a copy, $1.00 a year. It will be doubled in size, doubled in quality.

Commencing with the January issue and continuing throughout the year PHYSICAL CULTURE will present a series of graduated lessons in physical culture applicable to the weakest and the strongest. They will be the most elaborately prepared lessons ever given to the public. Nearly $2,000.00 will be spent for photographs and half-tones and in the preparation of the subject matter that will be used to describe and illustrate these lessons.

The title of these valuable instructions is Physical Development Simplified. They represent the life work of Bernarr Macfadden, editor of PHYSICAL CULTURE. *An opportunity is thus presented to you to obtain a complete course in physical culture from one of the highest authorities at a small cost.* Each issue will contain a complete lesson, which can be followed until the lesson of the subsequent month appears. In the various lessons there will be about 150 photographic illustrations from poses by the editor, showing in detail and describing in the plainest possible manner how every part of the body can be strengthened and developed at your own home without apparatus. Not only are complete and detailed instructions given for the development of the external muscular system, but special instructions are given for strengthening the lungs, the heart, the digestive organs, and the entire internal nervous, vital and general functional system. Also advice for the curing without expense by natural means all the various common complaints from which nearly every person occasionally suffers.

BERNARR MACFADDEN, Editor of Physical Culture Magazine.

Editorial articles and stories, profusely illustrated, on every subject appertaining to health and strength will appear monthly.

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PROF. R. A. ASTRO, Box 3693, PHILADELPHIA, PA.

$12.98 STEEL RANGE

For $12.98 without reservoir or shelf. $17.98 with porcelain lined reservoir, high shelf and warming closet, exactly as illustrated, we sell this high grade, big 325-pound steel range, that others advertise and sell at $25.00 to $35.00. Hundreds of other big price making surprises in our complete Stove Catalogue, sent free on application. If you want anything in the way of a steel range, cook stove, heater, gasoline or oil stove, we can save you nearly one-half in price.

Every stove made in our own foundry.

For the most wonderful stove prices, complete catalogue and our SPECIAL PAY AFTER RECEIVED OFFER, cut this ad. out and mail to

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This head of Mrs. Wilcox was sketched by Dorothy D. Deene, Special Artist for "*New Thought.*"

FREE We are sending out a few beautiful Brown Art Portraits of Mrs. Wilcox and William Walker Atkinson, editors of "New Thought." Readers of this paper will be in time to receive this handsome gift, together with recent writings on "New Thought," and full particulars of our

$1000 CASH PRIZE

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"NEW THOUGHT"
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☞These Portraits are worth framing

LATEST & BEST OF FOODS

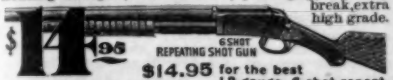
Argument is unnecessary.
You want Food.
Dissertations on chemistry
are a waste of time.
You want breakfast quickly.
Protein-Starch-Heat-units.
Bah!—
You Know Corn!
Well, the best Southern
White Corn is used to make

KORN-KRISP

One taste convinces

$3.48 $3.48 FOR NON-EJECTOR.

$3.98 FOR AUTOMATIC SHELL EJECTOR buys our Long Range Winner. 12-gauge, Breech Loading Shotgun, walnut stock, pistol grip, top snap break, extra high grade.



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AUTOMATIC REVOLVER, $2.75. Automatic Hammerless REVOLVER, $3.25

$1.29 per 100 for best Loaded Shotgun Shells made. 19c per 100 for best 22-caliber short cartridges. All other sizes at correspondingly low prices.

MARLIN REPEATING SHOTGUNS. - - - $16.25
STEVEN'S CRACK SHOT RIFLES - - - - 2.25
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For lowest prices ever known on all kinds of guns and sporting goods, from the cheapest to the best, cut this ad. out and mail to us, and receive our Sporting Goods Catalogue Free by return mail. Address,

SEARS, ROEBUCK & CO., CHICAGO.

Be Your Own Boss!

MANY MAKE $2,000.00 A YEAR. You have the same chance. Start a Mail Order Business at home. We tell you how. Money coming in daily. Enormous profits. Everything furnished. Write at once for our "Starter" and FREE particulars.

B. C. KRUEGER CO., 155 Washington Street, Chicago, Ill.

CHILDREN TEETHING

For Children While Cutting Their Teeth.

An Old and Well Tried Remedy

FOR OVER FIFTY YEARS.

MRS. WINSLOW'S SOOTHING SYRUP

has been used for over FIFTY YEARS by MILLIONS of MOTHERS for their CHILDREN WHILE TEETHING, with PERFECT SUCCESS. IT SOOTHES THE CHILD, SOFTENS the GUMS, ALLAYS all PAIN; CURES WIND COLIC, and is the best remedy for DIARRHŒA. Sold by Druggists in every part of the World. Be sure and ask for **Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup**, and take no other kind.

Twenty-five Cents a Bottle.

The Back

The why some shop-keepers do not sell **President Suspenders** is they make more money on imitations. 50c. and $1.00. Ask at favorite shop, or post prepaid from

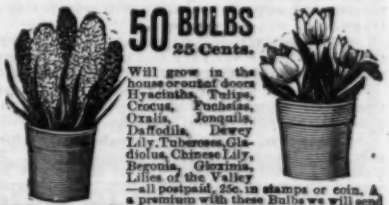
C. A. Edgarton Mfg. Co. Box 201 H, Shirley, Mass.

Send 6 cents for catalogue.

WOMEN TO DO SEWING Binding Specialties. $4 per 100. Can make six an hour. Material sent free prepaid. Send addressed reply envelope for full particulars. Universal Co., Dept. 211, Walnut St., Philadelphia, Pa.

WANTED LADIES

to embroider dollies and centerpieces at home; steady work. All materials furnished. Highest prices paid. No canvassing. Send stamped envelope to ELY NOVELTY CO., Dept. L, Ely Bldg., Chicago.



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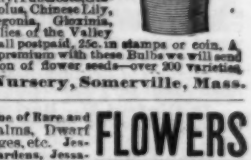
Will grow in the house or at front doors Hyacinths, Tulips, Crocus, Fuchsias, Oxalis, Jonquils, Daffodils, Dewey Lily, Tuberoses, Gladiolus, Chinese Lily, Begonia, Ginxinia, Lilies of the Valley —all postpaid, 25c. in stamps or coin. A premium with these Bulbs we will send FREE a giant collection of flower seeds—over 200 varieties. Address **Hillside Nursery, Somerville, Mass.**

FREE A Catalogue of Rare and Choice Palms, Dwarf Pot Oranges, etc. Jessamine Gardens, Jessamine, Fla. **FLOWERS**

$20 A WEEK Straight salary and expenses to men with rig to introduce our Poultry Mixture in country; year's contract; weekly pay. Address, with stamp, Monarch Mfg. Co., Box 497, Springfield, Ill.

The WOODEN HEN



A high-class self-regulating incubator on a small scale. Fifty egg capacity. Heat, moisture and ventilation automatically and perfectly controlled. Price only $6.80.

Send for the **Wooden Hen Book**; mailed free, together with a book containing 14 colored views and telling all about the **EXCELSIOR INCUBATOR**, if you name this paper.

GEO. H. STAHL, Quincy, Illinois.

Letters Worth Reading.

It is interesting, as indicating how people look upon a really pure and wholesome article of food, to reprint a few of the thousands of letters received by the Cream of Chocolate Company, of Danvers, Mass., whose announcement appears on page xiii in this issue of THE BLACK CAT.

600 West Church St., Elmira, N. Y., October 4, 1902. Gentlemen: — Your Cream of Chocolate is truly and rightly named, it is simply delicious. I can hardly wait till I receive your prize cook book of recipes, "How to use Cream of Chocolate." At a sale here for the benefit of the Old Ladies' Home, I purchased a can, having read of it a few days ago. I think that which you put in little bags would be fine for the traveling public. I await the coming of the recipe book and wish you all success. Most cordially yours, MRS. ADDISON D. BLAIR.

3042 Washington St., Roxbury, Mass., August 27, 1902. Dear Sirs: — Your Cream of Chocolate is delicious, perfect. We served it to some lady callers one evening and they still talk about it. I enclose address of an elderly lady, with a fractured thigh, to whom I wish you would do the favor of sending a sample. Yours truly, E. F. SPAULDING, M.D.

5 Pleasant St., Worcester, Mass., September 13, 1902. Gentlemen: — I have used the Cream of Chocolate and find that it is far better than any other chocolate I have ever seen or used before. Would be pleased to have you send box of samples to give to patients. Also would like the name of some retail dealer who carries the article in Worcester. Thanking you in advance, I remain, yours, H. EUGENE WATKINS, D.M.D.

Sebago Lake, Me., September 11, 1902. Gentlemen: — I received your letter containing the circulars and have given these to some of my friends. I am always ready to help you in advertising Cream of Chocolate, for I think it very nice indeed. I like it very much for cooking. Yours very truly, MISS LULAH E. WADLEIGH.

416 Locust St., Kalamazoo, Mich., September 15, 1902. Gentlemen: — I enclose my recipe envelopes which I think hold excellent results from my experience with Cream of Chocolate. It really is the finest form of chocolate that I have ever tried, and I use a large amount in my work. I have a general knowledge of domestic science, but give more attention to cake making and desserts, though I keep in touch with all things regarding domestic science. Hoping you may reach great success with your chocolate and I am quite sure its true merits and superior quality will win for it a great name, I am sincerely yours, MISS NORA GARRISON.

Madelia, Minn., September 13, 1902. Gentlemen: — We got the package today and think it is fine. Will try and persuade our grocer here to get it. Will you please give me the name of the nearest grocer who keeps it in stock. Yours truly, J. FLANDERS.

518 Main St., Worcester, Mass., September 18, 1902. Gentlemen: — We have tried Cream of Chocolate and like it very much. It makes a very delicious drink. I should be pleased to receive some samples. Yours truly, DR. GEORGE E. SAVAGE.

Hampton, Conn., September 16, 1902. Dear Sirs: — This is a small town with two stores, and we are ten miles from any city. Willimantic is where I got my first box of Cream of Chocolate, and I think if one of the stores here would keep it, it would be very nice. People would like it after using one box. Yours truly, MILLIE E. WETHERELL.

80 Pleasant St., Worcester, Mass., September 19, 1902. Gentlemen: — I received the samples of Cream of Chocolate you kindly sent, and will put them in good hands. My own folks like it very much, it is a prime article. Hastily yours, DR. B. M. PEVEY.

18 Binford St., Boston, Mass., September 25, 1902. Gentlemen: — You have a good article. I know it, for I have tried it. I began to drink Cream of Chocolate several months ago, and I shall be a regular customer. Very truly yours, AVERY L. RAND.

Grand Rapids, Mich., September 26, 1902. Gentlemen: — We like the Cream of Chocolate very much and all our friends who sample it ask, What is it and where did you get it? Very truly yours, WILLIAM J. PALM.

221 Main St., Worcester, Mass., September 23, 1902. Gentlemen: — I received the package of samples of Cream of Chocolate in good condition on Monday and made a liberal distribution of the contents. All who received these samples decided it to be the finest article of the kind on the market. I could have made good use of all the samples myself, but felt I would not be doing you justice unless I distributed them, as I said I would do in my letter. I shall continue to recommend Cream of Chocolate as being of the very highest quality. It actually melts in the mouth. With many thanks I am sincerely yours, M. K. BARTLETT, Manager N. Y. Dental Parlors.

Hannibal, Mo., September 22, 1902. Gentlemen: — I have used Cream of Chocolate since it has been introduced here, and I like it better than any cocoa or chocolate preparation I have as yet seen and I think I have tried them all. I enclose a recipe that I made up myself, and which I make regularly every week. I trust your expert cooks will have good success with it and like it as well as all do here who have tried it. Yours truly, MRS. MARGARET BISHOP SPIEDEL.

320 County St., New Bedford, Mass., September 11, 1902. Dear Sirs: — I would like to have you send me a number of blanks for your prize contest, as I have a number of original recipes which I think will be acceptable to you. I am an admirer of Cream of Chocolate and think where chocolate is used its possibilities are unlimited. Very truly yours, MRS. C. B. BABCOCK.

Wareham, Mass., September 12, 1902. Cream of Chocolate Company, Sirs: — I have been using your Cream of Chocolate and like it very much. I wish to get more, but none of the grocery stores in this town keep it. Will you send me the price by mail, postpaid? Please address MRS. ALBERT HUMPHREY.

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